



NEWS RELEASE

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U.S. Small Business Administration and Social Security Administration Join Forces to Help Americans with Disabilities

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and the Social Security Administration (SSA) have joined forces to help improve employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for Americans with disabilities.

As part of President Clinton's Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities, the two federal agencies signed a partnership agreement to coordinate the efforts of SBA's Welfare-to-Work initiative and the SSA's Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income programs to help adults with disabilities find gainful employment or become entrepreneurs. Vice President Al Gore witnessed the signing ceremony today in the Indian Treaty Room of the Old Executive Office Building.

"When the President created the Employment of Adults with Disabilities Task Force, the SBA became an enthusiastic and committed member," SBA Administrator Aída Alvarez said. **"We have undertaken an aggressive outreach campaign to inform people with disabilities about SBA programs and services. The partnership with Social Security is another step forward to link small businesses seeking workers with Americans with disabilities."**

"As a nation, we are best served when all of our citizens have the opportunity to contribute their talent, ideas and energy to the workforce," Commissioner of Social Security Kenneth S. Apfel said. **"President Clinton and Vice President Gore have made employment of persons with disabilities one of their highest priorities."**

As part of the agreement the SBA and SSA plan to advise their respective field offices of the important role each agency can play by coordinating the efforts of SBA's Welfare-to-Work initiative and the SSA's Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income programs. Each agency will encourage its field offices to cooperate at the local level, share information about businesses and non-profit organizations that train beneficiaries with disabilities, and work together on job fairs and other community outreach activities.

The partnership agreement is the result of a presidential executive order, which created the President's Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities in 1998. The SBA and 10 other federal agencies are working together to develop small business and entrepreneurial activities for adults with disabilities and to increase the employment rates as close as possible to that of the general adult population.

For more information on these and other SBA programs, call the SBA Answer Desk at 1-800-U-ASK-SBA, or visit the SBA's extensive website at www.sba.gov.

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